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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 005478

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: DFM KARASIN ON UKRAINE, BELARUS, GEORGIA, MOLDOVA
AND KOSOVO

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns. Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary. In a November 21 meeting with the Ambassador, DFM Karasin requested the USG's understanding of the "erroneous" Ukrainian interpretation of "Holodomor (1932-33 famine)" and other events that happened during WW2. He urged that the USG lift the sanctions imposed by the U.S. Treasury against Belarus's biggest petrochemical conglomerate, Belneftekhim. Karasin previewed the GOR's intention to raise the two South Ossetian peacekeepers in Georgian custody since August 20 at the OSCE Madrid Ministerial. He did not rule out a possibility of Russia - Georgia foreign ministers meeting on the margins of the Madrid ministerial. Karasin reiterated his earlier statement that the GOR did not object to Philip Remler's candidacy as the next OSCE Moldova Head of Mission (HOM) although he worried about the "propriety" of the U.S. keeping the job for the eighth time. End summary.

Holodomor and Roman Shukhevich

¶2. (C) Karasin opened his November 21 meeting with the Ambassador by stressing the need for a clear understanding of historical facts, then underlining Russia's concern with the "erroneous tonality" of the Ukrainian authorities' interpretation of the Holodomor as a genocide specifically targeted at Ukrainians. No one disputes that the Holodomor occurred, but equating it with the Holocaust while ignoring other victims -- Kazakhs, Russians and Belarusians-- would be unethical, Karasin said. He claimed that this "skewed" interpretation was in evidence at the Holodomor exhibition at the Ukrainian Cultural Center. (On November 19, a group of activists from the Eurasian Youth Union raided and damaged the exhibition in protest. The MFA criticized the exhibition, but condemned the youths' behavior.) The GOR had no problem supporting the recent UNESCO resolution honoring Holodomor victims which, at the GOR's urging had added other nations to the list of victims and removed the reference to genocide.

¶3. (C) Karasin argued that Ukrainian President Yushchenko's November 13-15 visit to Israel should have made him more sensitive to the implications of awarding the title of Hero of Ukraine to Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) leader Roman Shukhevich. Shukhevich had been known as a Nazi collaborator, Karasin said.

Belneftekhim

¶4. (C) Karasin requested that the USG unfreeze Belneftekhim's assets. He termed the November 12 Treasury decision to implement sanctions against Belarus's biggest petrochemical conglomerate "incomprehensible," and noted the impact the freeze would have on the Belarusian economy.

Georgia

15. (C) Karasin described Georgian First Deputy Foreign Minister Vashkidze's November 9 Moscow visit as "fruitless." According to Karasin, Vashkidze suggested that "The two countries should improve their relationship." at the same time that Russia was being portrayed in the ugliest possible light during the Georgian election campaign. The approach did not resonate well in Moscow, Karasin said. The GOR would continue to engage directly with the Georgians, not through the media. He warned against possible Georgian military "adventurism" in South Ossetia, which could be catalyzed by the "simpleminded logic" that events on the streets of Tbilisi are somehow connected with South Ossetia. He urged that the U.S. use its "special" relationship with Georgia to avert tensions in South Ossetia. The Ambassador replied that the U.S. had been clear publicly and privately about its concerns about recent problems in Georgia but emphasized the need for Russia also to show restraint in its rhetoric and actions, and to urge restraint by its own friends in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Ambassador also expressed appreciation for regular communications with Karasin and the GOR on Georgia. Karasin said the GOR also found said communication to be very helpful.

16. (C) Karasin expressed frustration at the GOG's "lopsided" application of UNSC 1781 on Abkhazia: focusing only on the right of the IDPs' return while ignoring other parts of the resolution, such as the expansion of UN monitoring to areas between the conflict zone and the Kodori Gorge. Karasin recalled that the GOG was neglecting the UNSYG's recommendation that the Patriot Youth Camp be closed. He said that talk of an alternative government in South Ossetia

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only aggravated the situation. The JCC meeting in Tbilisi was important, although it produced few results.

OSCE Ministerial Preview

17. (C) Karasin said that the GOR is planning to raise at the Madrid OSCE Ministerial the fates of two South Ossetian soldiers in Georgian custody for over two months. In response to the Ambassador's question, he did not rule out a meeting between Lavrov and Bezhuashvili in Madrid, and said Lavrov would be ready to meet if the Georgians were.

OSCE Moldova HOM

18. (C) Karasin reiterated that he did not object to Philip Remler's candidacy for the HOM OSCE Moldova job. He wondered, however, about the "propriety" of reserving the job for an American for the eighth time in a row, and recalled that any decision has to be made in accordance with OSCE procedures and with the agreement of the Moldovan government.

Kosovo

19. (C) Asked by the Ambassador about the impact on the frozen conflicts of Kosovo's possible unilateral declaration of independence, DFM Karasin quickly said, "They'd better not." He refrained from "painting a post-December 10 picture, noting that the new international situation that it will trigger could introduce a variety of unknown consequences." Karasin reiterated the GOR position -- delay the decision at least till the middle of 2008.

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